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ABSTRACT

This paper provides the results of a survey, conducted in 1991-92, on the use of adjunct faculty in the English and business departments at all 64 campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. A total of seven English department chairs and eight business department chairs responded to the survey. It was found that, on average, the English departments employed 12 adjunct faculty and 28 full-time faculty, while the business departments employed 7.4 adjunct faculty and 21.4 full-time faculty. The chairs also commented on their efforts to provide orientation programs for adjunct faculty and the supervision of adjunct faculty. No specific responses were provided in regard to classroom visitation procedures for adjunct faculty, although some chairs in both types of departments commented on the actual classroom visitations that do take place. The responses also address the types of courses taught by adjuncts, the evaluation of adjunct faculty, the integration of adjunct personnel into departmental affairs, the effect of the use of adjunct faculty on the quality of instruction, and the economic impact of the use of adjunct faculty. (MDM)

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by S.M. (Steve) Walsh, Ph.D., State University of New York, College at Oneonta, NY

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Business and English, English and Business: 15 SUNY Chairs Provide Feedback on the Use of Adjunct Faculty Members within Their Disciplines

by S.M. (Steve) Walsh, Ph.D., State University of New York, College at Oneonta, NY

During the 1991-92 school year, the Operations Committee of the SUNY-wide University Senate conducted a research study on the use of adjunct faculty by soliciting responses from department chairs throughout the 64-campus SUNY system. As the study would ultimately say, the committee was concerned with the effect of the use of adjuncts "upon the quality of instruction," as well as "the undergraduate experience" and related changes in "the burdens placed upon full-time faculty" --all pedagogical concerns.

Initially, the author of this paper headed a subcommittee of the SUNY Operations Committee which developed an instrument for eliciting both quantitative and qualitative insights. Thereafter, in completing the study, I also analyzed the responses and wrote the report which was subsequently published by SUNY in January, 1994. What follows is a comparative examination of the feedback provided by those chairs who were supervising English and business disciplines which will indisputably be central to the productive future of students, as well as to the quality of their lives.

Response Summaries

1. How extensive is your use of adjunct or part-time teaching faculty?

On average the English departments employed 12 adjunct professors and 28 full-time professors. The adjuncts typically instructed 28 out of a total of 101 course offerings per college.

By contrast, the Business departments employed 7.4 adjunct faculty and 21.4 full-timers with the adjuncts typically teaching 13 out of a total of 77 course offerings per semester.

2. What efforts are extended within your department to provide orientation for newly hired adjunct faculty?

Three English departments (42.9% of the respondent English Chairs) said that all their adjuncts had been with them for a long time and therefore needed little or no orientation. Another 3 departments indicated that a variety of efforts were extended usually including an orientation booklet or instructional handbook including information about the college/university, relevant program offerings, course objectives, possible textbooks, and possible evaluation methodology with some providing mentor information and information about departmental processes of dialogue. Another department indicated that it was developing a new comprehensive approach to its orientation that was to be administered by the Chair.

Four "traditional" Business Departments (50% of the respondents) provided adjuncts with syllabi, handouts, examinations, etc., that had been used previously, along with ample opportunities to talk with full-time personnel who had taught those courses in the recent past. The other 4 "innovative" departments engaged in some or all of the following: first using the adjuncts as discussion leaders in supervised settings, providing them with instructor manuals and with direct assistance in developing course materials, and with ongoing coaching taking various forms for unique courses.

2a. Are the efforts sufficient?

English Department responses to this question were mixed with four respondents (57.1%) answering "Yes." The 3 Chairs who responded "No" indicated that more efforts are needed for incoming adjuncts without providing specifics.

Five Business Department Chairs (62.5 %) answered "Yes" without amplification; the remaining 3 that said "No" indicated that they do a better job of selection and training in some areas than they do in others.

2b. How does this contrast with the orientation that is provided for newly hired full-time teaching professionals?

Four English Chairs (57.1%) indicated that their orientation efforts for adjunct personnel are at least equivalent to those provided for full-timers. 2 departments (28.6%) said that the adjunct orientation efforts are better. The one exception (14.3%) noted schedule conflicts occasioned by specialized adjunct courses taught by journalists either very early or very late in the day and not permitting much direct contact.

Two Business Chairs (25%) believe that they provide better orientation for incoming adjuncts than they do for newly hired full-timers. Three (37.5%) said that adjunct orientation was worse; the remaining three (37.5%) said that it was about the same.

2c. Is there any supplementary orientation that is provided by some other agency within the college?

Two of the English Department Chairs did not respond. One Chair indicated that there was no additional orientation effort. Four Chairs indicated that there were additional orientation efforts provided most frequently by personnel offices including such information as available benefits, library services, computer services, and institutional research facilities.

One Business Chair (12.5%) indicated that there was supplementary orientation; the remaining seven (87.5%) specified that orientation is handled entirely within the department.

2d. As a department chair what concerns do you have about the appropriateness of these orientation efforts?

The majority of English Department responses either expressed no opinion (two Chairs) or indicated that the efforts seemed to be appropriate (four Chairs). One Chair said that the current efforts are inappropriate and that consequently that department is developing a new orientation system.

Two Business Chairs did not respond; four expressed the feeling that current efforts are appropriate; two indicated that efforts are inappropriate. Very little further amplification was provided.

3. How are your adjunct professors supervised?

English Department responses to this question were varied with most indicating supervision by the Chair, Director of Composition, or some collective body such as a Personnel Committee, or Freshman Writing Committee.

One Business Chair said that supervision is provided only as it is needed when specific problems arise. The other seven indicated that observation, informal contacts, feedback from students, student course evaluations, and monitoring by both mentor faculty and other faculty within the specific discipline, all provide input and assistance as part of the supervisory process.

3a. Is there some difference between this level of supervision and that which is provided for your full-time teaching personnel?

One English Chair provided no response to this question; four said *Yes*; two said *No*. No amplification was provided.

Four Business Chairs (50%) said there was a difference; the remaining four said there was no difference, again with no further amplification.

3b. If the answer to Question 3a is yes, would you say that the difference is dramatic or subtle?

Of those English Department Chairs who responded *Yes* to Question **3a**, two indicated that the difference was *subtle* but provided no amplification.. The other two Chairs specified that the difference was *dramatic*, indicating that there was a difference of attitude by full-time and supervisory personnel toward adjuncts, deriving from the fact that appointment to a full-time position could ultimately lead to tenure.

All of the Business Chairs who noted that there was a difference felt that it was *subtle*. They indicated that full-time faculty are more independent whereas adjuncts need more help in approaching unfamiliar courses, developing appropriate instructional techniques, creating course outlines and lesson plans, and learning to properly utilize instructor manuals and supplements. Newly-hired full-time business faculty also go through more formal evaluation processes than those which are used for adjuncts.

3c. Are you comfortable or uncomfortable with this for any reason?

One English Chair did not respond, one expressed indifference, and three indicated that they were comfortable. Two English Chairs indicated that they were uncomfortable because of conflicts between supervisory personnel or differences of opinion with supervisory bodies, such as the Departmental Personnel Committee. No further amplification was provided about the causes of discomfort. All of the Business Chairs (100%) are comfortable with the procedures currently in use.

4. What is the classroom visitation procedure within your department for adjunct personnel?

No specific responses were provided by the Chairs of either the English or Business Departments, although responses were provided for the subquestions.

4a. For example, do you conduct such visitations?

English Department responses were basically *Yes* or *No*, with three chairs (42.9%) indicating *Yes*, and four chairs (57.1%) *No*.

Five Business Chairs (62.5%) do not conduct classroom visitations; the three who do (37.5%) tend to do so primarily in the early semesters or quarters of the adjuncts' employment, or they do so when adjuncts are being considered for renewal or promotion.

4b. Do full-time or other adjunct personnel conduct visitations?

Two English Department Chairs did not respond, four indicated that full-time personnel conducted visitations, and in one department the visitation is conducted entirely by the full-time Director of Composition.

Four Business Department Chairs did not respond. In four other Business departments full-time faculty conduct classroom visitations. One Business department also uses videotaping for advisory purposes in order to help its adjunct personnel.

4c. If full-time teachers or other adjunct personnel conduct visitations, do they do so for advisory purposes, for peer evaluations, or some combination of the two, or for other purposes?

Of the five English departments that responded affirmatively to Question **4b**, one does so for advisory purposes, and four do so for a combination of advisory and evaluative purposes. Of the four Business Department Chairs who responded affirmatively to Question **4b**, two indicated that visitations are for both advisory and evaluative purposes; one said that they are for peer evaluative purposes only; the remaining one indicated that they are for advisory purposes only.

5. In what ways are adjunct instructional personnel used within your department?

All seven English Chairs (100%) use their adjuncts for instructional purposes only, as do the eight Business Chairs. Some Chairs were quite specific about the subject areas covered.

5a. Do they teach introductory courses, service courses, specialized courses which draw upon some unique expertise, advanced level courses, etc.? Or do they teach some mix of courses?

One English Department Chair (14.3%) indicated that adjuncts teach only introductory courses; one English Chair (14.3%) said service courses only; one Chair (14.3%) said specialized courses only; two Chairs (28.6%) said a mix of introductory, service and specialized courses; two Chairs (28.6%) said a mix of introductory, service and specialized courses; two Chairs (28.6%) said a mix of all types of courses.

One Business Department Chair (12.5%) indicated that adjuncts teach both introductory and service courses; one (12.5%) both introductory and specialized courses; one (12.5%) specialized courses only; one (12.5%) introductory, service, and specialized courses; and four (50.0%) a mix of all four types of courses.

5b. Again, what are your opinions about this utilization?

Six English Department Chairs (85.7%) indicated that this is acceptable, stating that the expertise would otherwise be unavailable. The objection that was raised within the context of the one unacceptable response (14.3%) was that there simply were too many part-time personnel.

Although a variety of reasons were cited -- sometimes relevant to the nature of the talent of local communities -- all of the responding Business Chairs consider the current utilization of adjunct teaching personnel to be acceptable.

6. What procedures do you have for the evaluation of adjunct personnel?

Three English Department Chairs did not respond. Of the others, one department uses student course evaluations exclusively, one uses personnel committee members to evaluate its adjuncts, one department uses student course evaluations and classroom visitations, and one department uses student course evaluations, classroom visitations, adjunct self-evaluations, and informal methods including observation, grapevine feedback and student feedback.

Four Business Departments (50.0%) use student course evaluations only; one (12.5%) uses classroom visitations only; one department (12.5%) uses student course evaluations and a review of teaching materials such as syllabi, handouts, and examinations; one department (12.5%) uses those plus a grade distribution analysis; the remaining department (12.5%) uses student course evaluations, student feedback, and informal methods like observation and feedback from other sources.

6a. How does this contrast with your method of evaluating full-time personnel?

One English Department Chair did not respond, three indicated that the procedure was the same, and three Chairs indicated that the procedures were more rigorous for full-time personnel, especially at times of renewal, promotion, or tenure consideration.

Two Business Department Chairs did not respond. Three indicated that evaluation methods for adjuncts are the same as those for full-time faculty. The remaining three indicated that the evaluation process is less rigorous for adjuncts, specifying that they have no research or publication requirements, and that the additional requirements for full-time faculty such as committee work, etc., are more comprehensive, requiring different evaluation procedures.

6b. Are you comfortable with this method?

Five English Department Chairs (71.4%) indicated that they were comfortable, with one Chair providing comments on the importance of carefully scrutinizing prospects before hiring, and maintaining strong internal communication afterwards. Two English Chairs (28.6%) indicated discomfort, with one Chair expressing the opinion that adjuncts are observed too closely and are put under too much pressure for the small amount that they are paid. All eight of the Business Department Chairs are comfortable with the method of evaluation.

7. To what extent are your adjunct pesonnel integrated into departmental affairs?

Four English Department Chairs (57.1%) indicated that adjunct personnel were well integrated, two Chairs (28.6%) indicated that they were poorly integrated, and one Chair (14.3%) said that it depends upon the particular adjunct. A recurring theme running through many of the English Department responses, whether they indicated that such personnel were well integrated or poorly integrated, noted how poorly adjuncts are paid.

Four Business Department Chairs (50.0%) said that their adjunct teaching personnel are well integrated; two (25.0%) said they are poorly integrated. The remaining two (25.0%) provided a mixed response with one Chair saying some adjuncts wish to become well integrated while others do not. The other Chair expressed a similar concept in somewhat more colorful language:

> *In some cases they are well integrated and work well with the full-time faculty, while in other cases they are contract labor.*

7a. Do adjunct personnel attend departmental meetings?

One English Department Chair (14.3%) simply answered *No*; six other departments (85.7%) indicated part-time personnel either attend departmental meetings or at least have the option of attending; one Chair (14.3%) indicated that adjunct personnel with term appointments have a vote that is equivalent to 1/2 of a full-time faculty member's vote in departmental meetings.

One Business Department Chair (12.5%) responded affirmatively; one (12.5%) noted that they only attend special meetings such as the first meeting of the school year; the remaining six (75.0%) indicated that adjuncts do not attend at all, citing such reasons as insufficient pay and the fact that bylaws do not permit adjuncts to vote.

7b. Are the experiences or opinions of adjunct personnel specifically elicited in any departmental decision-making process?

Three English Department Chairs (42.8%) indicated that the opinions of adjunct personnel are specifically elicited; three Chairs (42.8%) indicated tht the opinions of adjunct personnel are not elicited; one Chair (14.3%) specified that such opinions are specifically elicited only in matters that concern freshman writing.

Six Business Department Chairs (75%) said *No*; two (25.0%) said adjuncts' experiences and opinions are elicited. No further amplification was provided.

7c. Do adjunct personnel have specific opportunities to interact either professionally or socially with other department personnel?

All of the English Department Chairs answered affirmatively. One Business Department Chair (12.5%) said that adjuncts are not provided such opportunities; the other seven (87.5%) said such opportunities are provided, but the accompanying comments indicated that those opportunities vary considerably--from nominal to substantial.

7d. Do you feel that this level of integration is completely desirable?

Five English Department Chairs (71.4%) responded *Yes*, two English Department Chairs (28.6%) answered *No*. Six Business Department Chairs (75.0%) feel it is completely desirable; two (25.0%) say it is not completely desirable.

7e. If your answer to d above is No, how would you want to see this level of integration changed?

The Chairs from both disciplines indicated that inevitably there is a two-tier system whenever part-time faculty are employed. They would like all faculty to be full-time.

7f. Are adjunct personnel voting members of your Academic Senate or governance body?

All Chairs from both areas responded *No*, and provided no further amplification.

8. What is the level of secretarial support that is provided for your adjunct personnel?

8a. Is it more, less, or the same that is provided for full-time faculty?

All seven English Department Chairs (100%) indicated that support was similar. Seven Business Department Chairs (87.5%) indicated that the support was the same; one (12.5%) reported that adjuncts receive more secretarial support.

8b. Do you feel that this is appropriate or inappropriate?

Six English Department Chairs (85.7%) indicated that the level of support is appropriate; the one Chair (14.3%) who indicated that it was inappropriate did not seem to be focused on the needs of the adjunct personnel so much as he or she was on the burden of responsibility that fell upon the department secretaries.

Six Business Department Chairs (75.0%) maintained that this level of secretarial support is appropriate; the one Business Department Chair (12.5%) who indicated that adjuncts receive more secretarial support felt that the level of support was inappropriate. One Chair (12.5%) indicated that the level of secretarial support was insufficient for all the departmental faculty, but acknowledged that nothing could be done about that because of the financial constraints.

9. What effect do you believe that your adjunct personnel have on the quality of instruction that is provided by your department?

One English Department Chair (14.3%) said that quality is diminshed, saying:

> *We have a strong core of long-term adjunct faculty on term appointments who enhance the quality. But in about 50% of the positions there is frequent turnover. We are sometimes forced to hire people we would rather not. Most part-time personnel also teach elsewhere, so the amount of attention they can give to our courses and our students is diminished.*

Six other English Department Chairs (85.7%) indicated that adjunct personnel enhance the quality of instruction. However, there were significant qualifying remarks in a few instances, noting that the commitment of full-time teaching personnel is greater and that the pool of applicants is sometimes small, resulting in the hiring of underqualified adjunct personnel.

One Business Department Chair (12.5%) said that some adjuncts enhance instruction while others are inferior to the full-time teaching personnel. That was the only negative comment. Three Business Chairs (37.5%) maintained that there was no effect, and four (50.0%) indicated that adjuncts enhance the quality of instruction.

9a. Again, please tell me if you believe this is desirable or undesirable?

Six English Department Chairs (85.7%) indicated that this is *desirable*; one chair (14.3%) that it is *undesirable*. Two Business Department Chairs (25.0%) felt that the effect of adjunct personnel on the quality of instruction was neither desirable nor undesirable; the other six (75.0%) felt their effect was desirable.

10. What has been the economic impact of adjunct personnel on your department in recent years?

One English Department Chair did not respond. Otherwise the responses were extremely varied. At one extreme a chair said:

So far we have maintained our old balance. Pressure from Administration to increase our use of adjuncts has been resisted.

Another Chair expressed a similar but somewhat different viewpoint, saying:

Not much. The many full-time professors who have retired haven't been replaced even by adjuncts. We have gotten enough money for a few adjuncts each year.

Taking a different slant from another angle, another English Department Chair said:

It has saved the College money.

And another Chair said:

It is helpful to the department but unfair to the part time faculty.

And two English Department Chairs expressed similar perspectives, synthesized as follows:

It costs the Administration less to hire adjuncts -- who are excessively low paid. It reduces the number of full-time faculty employees. The Administration is forced to do this, or alternatively to severely cut back on course offerings because the government, the legislature, and apparently the taxpayers of the State of New York do not really believe in high quality public education.

Two Business Department Chairs (25.0%) said that there has been no economic impact because of adjunct teaching personnel. It should be noted that both of these business departments made only nominal use of adjuncts. The comments of the remaining 75% were primarily positive. It was noted that adjuncts permit more cost-effective scheduling of full-time faculty. It was also noted that adjuncts make it possible to offer courses and programs to students who want those courses and programs, and that adjuncts enrich the departments and course offerings by providing different points of view. And it was noted that the departments would serve fewer students without their adjuncts. However, one department Chair also commented that the increased use of adjuncts has accompanied a decline in the number of regular faculty which has also made that department more vulnerable to budget cuts.

10a. Have you had occasion to increase the number of adjuncts in your department?

Three English Department Chairs (42.8%) indicated that the number of adjuncts has increased in the recent past, stating that the workload has increased but that the number of full-time authorizations has not increased. Four Business Department Chairs (50%) also responded affirmatively.

10b. Have you had occasion to decrease the number of adjuncts in your department?

Six English Department Chairs (85.7%) indicated that they had not. On the other hand, three Business Department Chairs (37.5%) said they had decreased their use of adjuncts.

10c. If you have not already done so, please indicate why you have provided the answers you have to Questions a and b above.

In a small number of cases, the decision to alter the number of adjuncts varies on a short-term basis, depending upon available funds and student enrollment. The Chairs who increased their use of adjuncts provided no further explanatory comments. The Chairs who have decreased their use of adjuncts noted that changes in programs or enrollments have necessitated such changes. One Business Department Chair said that they had hired two full-time faculty in the recent past, resulting in decreased use of adjuncts.